

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
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SUBJECT: SALT AND GREY AREA ISSUES

REF: (A) LONDON 9770 DTG 201707Z JUN 78
(B) USNATO 537 DTG 181221Z JAN 78
(C) USNATO 864 DTG 261914Z JAN 78

1. WE WELCOME EMBASSY LONDON'S RECENT CABLE (REF A) ON SALT AND GREY AREA SYSTEMS. WE HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREY AREA AND TNF MODERNIZATION ISSUES WITH INTEREST (REFTELS) SINCE ALLIED CONCERNS OVER EUROPEAN REGIONAL NUCLEAR SYSTEMS TOUCH THE MOST VITAL INTERESTS OF THE ALLIANCE. WE BELIEVE THE POINTS MADE IN THOSE REFTELS CONCERNING BOTH PROCEDURAL AND SUBSTANTIVE APPROACHES TO GREY AREA ISSUES REMAIN VALID.

2. THUS, WHILE WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO REMAIN FLEXIBLE AND OPEN ON HOW TO APPROACH THESE ISSUES AND TO USE THE ALLIANCE AS THE PRINCIPLE FORUM FOR ALLIED CONSULTATIONS ON THEM, WE ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT A STRUCTURAL, FORMAL INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE, I.E., THE CREATION OF A SPECIFIC NEW FORUM WITHIN NATO, IS AN APT OR
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REQUIRED RESPONSE TO THE CONCERNS OF THE FRG AND OTHER ALLIES ON GREY AREA ISSUES AND TNF. IN THE MID-1960'S,

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INSTITUTION (THE NPG) SOLVED A SEEMING HARDWARE PROBLEM BECAUSE THE BASIC ISSUE AT STAKE WAS ONE OF PARTICIPATION AND NOT ONE OF HARDWARE. AT PRESENT, WE BELIEVE THE KEY PROBLEM IS A MIXTURE OF

POLITICAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL PERCEPTIONS OF AN ENHANCED THREAT, A PERCEIVED NEED TO DEVELOP A NEW ARMS SYSTEM TO COUNTER THIS THREAT, AND DESIRE TO HAVE BARGAINING CHIPS FOR A POTENTIAL ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATION WHICH COULD HELP REDUCE THIS PERCEIVED THREAT. WE DO NOT BELIEVE, THEREFORE, THAT ALLIED CONCERNS WOULD BE SUBSTANTIVELY ALLEVIATED BY PROPOSING ANOTHER INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION.

3. WE WOULD ARGUE THAT, AT THE PRESENT STAGE, WE ARE ON THE RIGHT TRACK PROCEDURALLY IN HANDLING GREY AREA SYSTEMS. OUR CURRENT APPROACH, AN ALTERNATING SERIES OF HIGH-LEVEL BILATERALS AND RE-INFORCED CONSULTATIONS IN THE NAC (AS LAST FEBRUARY AND PROJECTED FOR JULY), SEEMS TO BE SERVING US WELL. (WE ALSO NOTE THIS APPROACH IS MORE LIKELY TO AVOID CREATING A FRENCH ATTENDANCE PROBLEM THAN WOULD AN EFFORT TO ESTABLISH A NEW FORUM). WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THIS PROCESS CONTINUE, AND INTENSIFY IF NEED BE, UNTIL SUCH TIME THAT IT APPEARS NEW APPROACHES ARE WARRANTED. IF, AS LONDON SUGGESTS (PARA 1, REF A), NEITHER THE BRITISH NOR FRENCH REALLY WANT GREY AREA NEGOTIATIONS, THEN SETTING UP A NEW FORUM TO DEAL SPECIFICALLY WITH THAT ISSUE WOULD BE UNSETTLING--IN THAT IT WOULD PERHAPS UNNECESSARILY RAISE THE ISSUE TO AN EVEN MORE PROMINENT LEVEL.

4. MOREOVER, AN EXISTING FORUM--THE NPG HIGH LEVEL GROUP (HLG)--IS ALREADY AVAILABLE FOR AIRING KEY ALLIED CONCERNS ON LONGER RANGE THEATER NUCLEAR SYSTEMS. HLG DISCUSSIONS
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SHOULD, IF SUCCESSFUL, HELP TO PRODUCE A COMMON APPRECIATION OF LONG-RANGE-SYSTEM ISSUES IN PARTICULAR AND THEATER NUCLEAR FORCE MODERNIZATION IN GENERAL. SUCH A COMMON APPRECIATION WILL DIRECTLY AID AND INFLUENCE ULTIMATE CONSIDERATION OF GREY AREA ISSUES.

5. AS TO THE QUESTION OF A "NATO ASSESSMENT CENTER," OUR INITIAL REACTION TO THIS PROPOSAL IS NEGATIVE. AS WITH THE FRENCH SATELLITE VERIFICATION PROPOSAL, WE BELIEVE THAT ANY LOCAL ANALYSIS UNIT WOULD QUICKLY TURN INTO ANOTHER POTENTIAL SOURCE OF CONTENTION AND THAT, BY ESTABLISHING YET ANOTHER SOURCE OF INTELLIGENCE OUTPUT, WE WOULD BE CREATING MORE PROBLEMS FOR OURSELVES THAN WE WOULD RESOLVE. WHILE SOME ALLIES MAY PERCEIVE A NEED FOR MORE "INDEPENDENT" ASSESSMENTS, WE ARE NOT PERSUADED THAT IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO FOREGO THE INITIATIVE WE RETAIN UNDER OUR CURRENT APPROACHES.

6. IN SUM, WE BELIEVE LONDON IS CORRECT IN ITS POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GREY AREA PROBLEM--I.E., PLACING THE FRG AT THE CENTER OF THE ISSUE--BUT DO NOT SENSE AN IMMEDIATE NEED FOR AN INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE. SELECTED BILATERALS,

REINFORCED NAC'S AND THE HLG SHOULD PROVIDE THE MACHINERY
NEEDED AT THIS TIME. WHAT IS ESSENTIAL IS TO REMAIN FLEXI-
BLE ON THE FUTURE EVOLUTION OF THESE DISCUSSIONS AND TO
ASSURE THAT OUR BILATERAL CONTACTS WITH OUR ALLIES, OUR
CONSULTATIONS IN THE NAC, AND THE WORK OF THE HIGH LEVEL
GROUP, ALL REMAIN SYNCHRONIZED AND CLOSELY CO-ORDINATED
WITH THE PACE AND CONTENT OF OUR OWN THINKING ON GREY AREA
SYSTEMS. GLITMAN

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